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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS NAVIGATE UNCERTAINTY UNDER NEW IMMIGRATION POLICIES

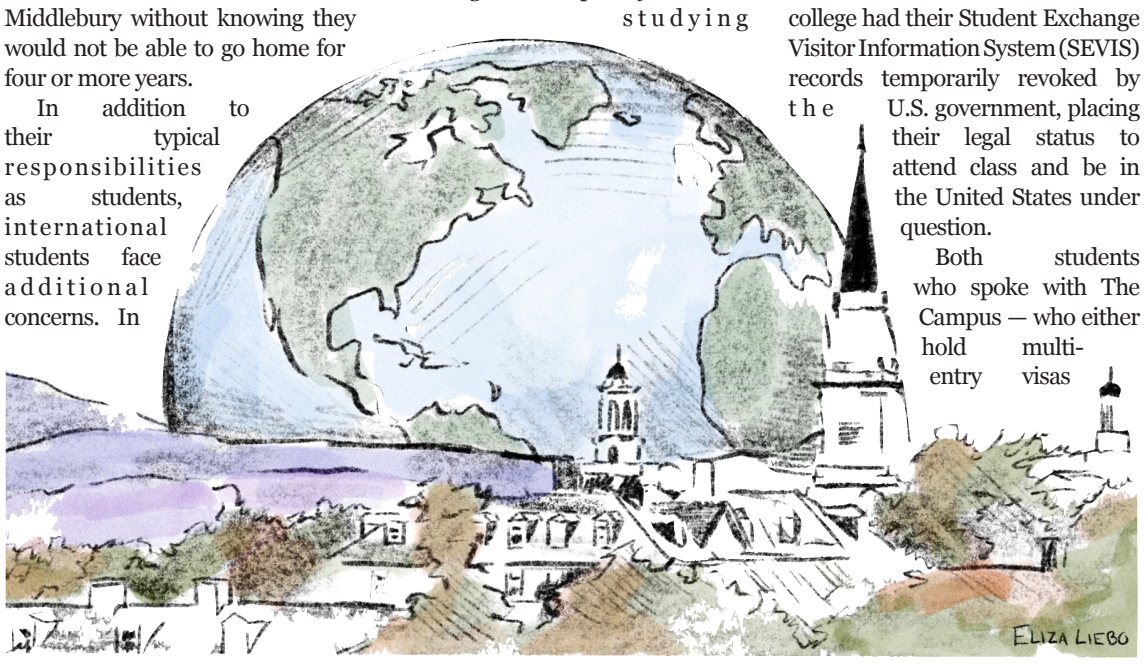
By NOOR KHAN
News Editor

In the 2025–2026 academic year, around 13% of Middlebury students were non-residents, hailing from more than 70 countries. For those students — and for all students in the United States without American citizenship — this means something very different from what it did before the second Trump administration took office.

Visa terminations and deportations of international students nationwide sparked panic early in 2025. Earlier this year, the Trump administration suspended the approval of immigrant visas for people from 75 countries and banned students from 35 countries from applying for an F, M, or J student visa, including Afghanistan, Iran, Haiti, Sudan, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority, among others. The list includes the countries of origin of several Middlebury students.

For those with single-entry visas, which permit entry into the U.S. only once, leaving the U.S. to return home could mean being barred from re-entry, as they cannot apply for a new visa. In addition, new State Department guidelines encourage students to apply for visas from their country of citizenship or an affiliated embassy, further restricting visa availability. Some students left home to attend Middlebury without knowing they would not be able to go home for four or more years.

In addition to their typical responsibilities as students, international students face additional concerns. In messages with The Campus, two international students — who chose to remain anonymous due to concerns about immigration status — mentioned constant considerations, such as carrying a folder of identity and immigration documents even when traveling within the U.S., monitoring their engagement on social media, and self-censoring in private communications. This reality drives decisions about picking majors, securing on-campus jobs, and studying abroad.



"There are so many loops we need to jump through. There is always so much paperwork, so many things all the time, and it's so overwhelming. On top of all that, we're just scared and anxious non-stop," one student said. "It's not easy to be on alert but also organized... if I'm doing anything at all, I have to think about so many things and so many consequences."

On April 16, 2025, an international student enrolled at the college had their Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records temporarily revoked by the U.S. government, placing their legal status to attend class and be in the United States under question.

Both students who spoke with The Campus — who either hold multi-entry visas or passports from countries not directly affected — shared the anxiety that comes with

Continued on Page 2

Domino's debut drives sales decline at the Grille, prompts innovation

By MAJA MUSA
Contributing Writer

On Dec. 29, Domino's Pizza opened a location in Middlebury at 40 Court Street. The Campus reported in a Jan. 15 article that Domino's offered a more cost-effective option than other local pizza shops such as Nino's and Green Peppers.

Domino's is now one of three chain fast-food establishments in town, alongside McDonald's and Dunkin'. It is also the only fast-food restaurant in Middlebury that offers delivery — a feature that has quickly reshaped late-night dining habits on campus.

Since Domino's opened, Middlebury Dining's retail operations — particularly The Grille — have seen a noticeable shift in sales patterns, prompting informal discussions about introducing an internal delivery service that would allow students to order food from The Grille directly to their dorms.

"Our sales have been down at night, but retail is still as successful as last year," Assistant

Continued on Page 3

COMMUNITYY AUDITING PROGRAM BRINGS LOCAL RESIDENTS INTO THE CLASSROOM

By KAI ARROWOOD
News Editor

In some Middlebury classrooms, a few seats are filled not by degree-seeking students but by local residents who have chosen to audit a course.

Since 2008, the college has allowed community members to audit most classes free of charge, in addition to welcoming residents to public lectures and events. Unlike student auditors, community auditors are not enrolled in the college's records and are not bound by formal attendance or grading requirements. The majority are retirees, as class schedules often overlap with traditional work hours.

To audit a class, community members must obtain approval from both the course instructor and the dean of curriculum before submitting a form to the registrar's office. As with student auditors, expectations for participation depend on the instructor. If space is available, professors generally welcome auditors.

"I participated like any other student," Tobi Andrews, who audited Associate Professor of Education Johnathan Miller-Lane's Education in the USA class in the fall semester, said. "He told me, 'I want to hear your voice. You bring something to the class from your experience.'"

According to Dean of Curriculum Grace Spetafora, last year there were 26 community auditors: 12 in the fall, three during J-Term, and 11 in the spring. This year's auditors hover at around the same amount: 11 in the fall, three in J-term, and six in the spring – 19 total. Before signing off on a community auditor's request, Spetafora double-checks enrollment, making sure a potential auditor doesn't prevent a registered undergraduate student from enrolling in the course.

Community auditors are also frequent attendees at department events – particularly the weekly politics luncheons, according to Political Science Professor Matthew Dickinson.

For Bruce Andrews, a recent retiree who moved to Middlebury in 2022, his experience attempting to audit a class was welcoming but rocky. He decided to audit Intro to American Politics with Professor Matthew Dickinson in the fall semester.

"[Dickinson] could not have been more open and welcoming," Andrews said. "But the interesting part is, he had no idea how this worked."

Although the opportunity for auditing as a non-student is publicized on the Middlebury website, many instructors aren't aware of the process. Andrews and his wife, Tobi, were referred to the registrar's office to gain the necessary approvals.

"We sort of had to bounce around a little bit to find someone who knew the process to get us in there," Andrews said.

Once in the class, auditors

Continued on Page 2

Starr and Painter to be Sophomore dorms, paving way for Feb housing in Coffrin

AVERY MURCH / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Coffrin Hall, built in 1986, currently and traditionally houses Middlebury's sophomore class. Next academic year, it will house juniors and seniors in the fall and J-Term and incoming Febs in the spring.

By MET LY
News Editor

In a campus-wide email on Feb. 16, Middlebury's Residential Life (ResLife) team announced housing updates for the 2026–27 academic year, including a reshuffling of sophomore housing and changes to Feb residential placement.

Coffrin Hall, which has traditionally housed sophomores, will transition to an upperclassmen dorm for the fall semester and J-Term before housing first-year Febs in the spring. Painter and Starr halls — the college's two oldest residential halls and both listed on the National Register of Historic Places — will instead house sophomores.

"We continually look to balance our occupancy needs with creating an optimal experience for students. Some changes this year [...] gave us an opportunity to rethink our current structure," The ResLife team wrote in an email to The Campus.

The shift also allows for Forest Hall, which has historically housed more than half of the Feb class, to remain an upperclassmen dorm through the academic year.

The ResLife team cited student feedback as a motivating factor behind the change. Feedback is sourced through forms, including from students in the room selection process, from students who previously moved out of Forest West, and from questions in the housing application.

"Coffrin has historically been one of the last sophomore buildings selected in the room selection process, and students have consistently mentioned it feeling far from other sophomore buildings," the ResLife team wrote. "Painter and Starr will put sophomores closer to other sophomores in Gifford."

The move will cluster sophomore housing around McCullough Lawn and the Ross Complex right across the street. Students have noted that living near their friends significantly impacts their Middlebury experience.

"There is something special about living right beside a person and having that closeness," Kayleigh Christley '28, who lives in Gifford with most of her close friends, said in an interview with The Campus. "There have been several times where I was totally breaking down, and I can't imagine having to walk across campus to have one of my friends hug me."

Christley contrasted her current experience with last year, when her friend group was split across campus.

"Last year, half of us were on the

Continued on Page 3

LOCAL

Middlebury residents approve a 15.9 million dollar budget
By ELIZABETH DELLIT

Acapella group The Dissipated Eight performs at Brandon
By KATRINA SHWARZ and ANNA DOUCET

▸ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

Headphones: Are we trying to shut out the world?
By KATHERINE GOODMAN

From Middlebury to Sarajevo: students must turn values into action
By ALEM HADZIC

▸ PAGE 6

OPINIONS

An open letter from your SGA president
By NICOLE MEYERS and THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

The value of an A-grade
By THE EDITOTIAL BOARD

▸ PAGE 7

ARTS & CULTURE

Middlebury Black film series screens "Foxy Brown"
By KIARA DOOKIE

'How to Get to Heaven From Belfast'
By PHOEBE ADLER

▸ PAGE 8

SPORTS

Miracle at Middlebury: men's hockey pulls off thrilling comeback
By THEO MANIATIS and THIE HARTHONO

Trinidad and skibago
By SIMON SCHMEIDER

▸ PAGE 11

International students navigate uncertainty under new immigration policies

Continued from Page 1

re-entry into the country, despite not having personally experienced issues.

"There definitely is a mental aspect to it where you are standing there in the immigration line scanning the officers to see who seems nicer, or worried that you might have posted something a long time ago that might get you in trouble," another student said. "I have never experienced this anywhere else or at any point in my life: the idea that some stranger can dictate whether I stay here and learn, or get sent home, or worse."

Members of the Admissions Office and the two students commended the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) program as a helpful and proactive resource for prospective and current international students. According to Jess Schlotfeldt, interim executive director of ISSS, the office provides support through individual appointments and timely updates regarding policy changes that may directly impact international students.

Still, ISSS's capabilities only extend so far. The two students shared that the college's remote location has given them a relative sense of safety when moving around campus regularly, but physical security remains a background anxiety.

Middlebury sits within 100 air miles of the U.S. border, where immigration agents have broader authority to conduct warrantless vehicle searches and set up checkpoints.

"It is always in the back of your head that you are different, and at any moment someone can threaten your position here," one student said.

In the potential event of seeing or interacting with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on campus, one student recalled that the general advice has been to call Public Safety. Although the student recognized the difficult position of campus security or administration, they also did not see this as a realistic solution.

"We never know what could be done to us," she said. "We never know if we will be in a situation where we can call PubSafe or make a phone call at all."

Recruiting and retaining future students

The college's global character is a central part of its messaging: the front page of the Middlebury website highlights the opportunity to study in "one of the most immersive and globally engaged experiences in higher education." Professor of International Economics and Director of International and Global Studies Sunder Ramaswamy expressed his belief that international students are a key component of that global reputation. As chair of the Define Global Mission and Strategy working group — part of college President Ian Baucom's 10-year plan — Ramaswamy said that he has received no "signals from higher-ups" or administration to "retreat" on this front.

"I think everybody came in [to the working group] with an understanding that international students play a very important role [at Middlebury]," Ramaswamy said. "Nobody at any moment said, 'Let's think about whether we should reduce the number of international students.'"

According to Associate Director of Admissions Santana Audet, the number of international applicants to the college under the 2025–2026 application cycle remained "steady" as compared to last year.

"It has been a challenging time for international students as U.S. immigration policies change rapidly," Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin wrote in an email to The Campus. "We were pleased that the majority of our incoming international students were able to join us on campus in Fall 2025 despite the disruptions and uncertainty."

This year, however, the Admissions Office has treated an applicant's immigration status based on their country of residence as an inevitable factor in its decision-making. As reported by Audet, admission readers review applications from "banned" countries in a manner similar to the past, but final decisions about the admitted class must consider immigration policies.

"To admit them would be lovely, to show how strong of a student they were, but if we can't actually get them onto our campus, then it's not going to benefit that student or us to have that admit out there, right?" Audet said. "It'd be disappointing for everyone. We can only work within the policies. So it's disheartening — there are huge swaths of the world that are not going to be able to be represented on our campus in next year's class."

Campus conversation: a lack of

Looking to the future, both students communicated in messages to The Campus that they hoped for greater support from departments other than ISSS, expressing that they have felt minimal reassurance or acknowledgment from the administration thus far.

"There are also domestic American students who try to be supportive, but I don't think anybody really knows how to support an international student who is in a difficult situation when it comes to these new policies," one student said.

In the absence of structured on-campus dialogue, according to students it can sometimes feel like these problems are siloed within the directly affected community.

"It would be nice to hold spaces where we can talk about how difficult it is to be an international student right now in the U.S., because this is something you don't hear about around campus," the other student said.

With no end in sight, these policies will shape the remainder of the education of all international students at the college, and likely the years following their graduation.

"I just wish people were more curious about others' stories," she said. "We are all so desensitized and look to the media for stories that are literally living among us."

Editor's Note: Managing Editor Yuvraj Shah '26 contributed reporting to this article.

STARR AND PAINTER TO BE SOPHOMORE DORMS, PAVING WAY FOR FEB HOUSING IN COFFRIN

Continued from Page 1

Hep and Stew side and the other were on the Allen side and that made planning things really difficult because it turned into a fight of which building are we going to have [our event] in? Who's going to have to walk?"

Other students are more indifferent towards the decision, citing cross-pollination between class years and the relative size of the campus.

"I've never really put much thought into where I live beyond whether the building has laundry," Ashley Gonzalez Lopez '27, a current resident of Starr who formerly lived in Coffrin, said in an interview. "It never affected me that we need class years to be closer to each other because I feel like there are a lot of interactions between years."

ResLife also cited logistical considerations in balancing bed counts across years.

"Since housing is by class year we needed to ensure that any building change would still have the number of beds needed for each class year group," the ResLife team wrote. "Since Painter and Starr have roughly the same number of beds as Coffrin we were able to make the swap more easily."

This year, incoming Febs were placed in Allen Hall, rather than being traditionally split between Hepburn and Forest Halls. ResLife cited student feedback indicating that splitting the class could feel isolating.

"With all the Febs split mostly between [Hepburn] and Forest, there ends up being a strange social divide between those groups as well as a lack of cohesion because you don't really know who is in your class until you officially meet them in some other setting," Zoe Heinrich-McMullen '27.5 said on her first semester experience in Hepburn Hall.

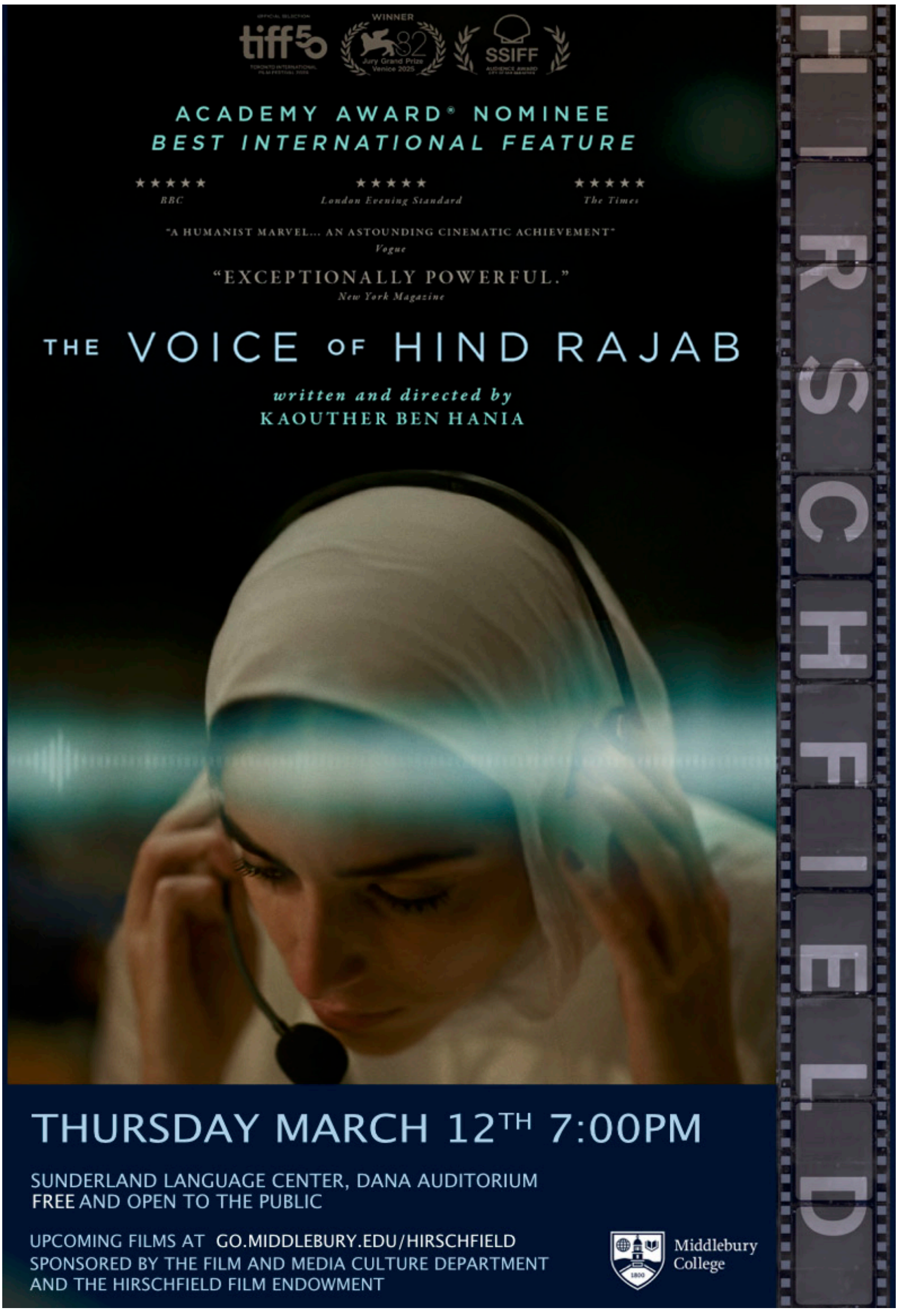
Henry Bolch '28, a residential assistant in Allen Hall, said the consolidated housing has strengthened class identity.

"Event programming can be more tailored to [the Feb class] since all the Febs are within the residential area," Bolch said.

The new setup in Allen has yielded "a lot of positive feedback" from the new Feb community, according to ResLife.

"We know that coming in mid-year is a unique experience, so being able to live near other peers going through the same thing allows them to build a strong community amongst their peers," the ResLife team wrote.

Editor's Note: Kayleigh Christley '28 is the Digital Director



Community auditing program brings local residents into the classroom

Continued from Page 1

ELIZA LIEBO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

can participate as much as they'd like. Among younger students with GPA pressures, community auditors bring a different approach to education, of interest in the class itself rather than its applicability in a potential career.

"Being in a class like Education in the USA, where I wasn't in a degree track, wasn't there for a grade, was a completely different educational experience for me," Tobi Andrews said. "It was fascinating to be back in a classroom with people who are living in a completely different set of world circumstances."

Middlebury's auditing program offers Middlebury residents an entry point into an otherwise selective institution, something Political Science Professor Daniel Fram, who audited classes at Boston College before graduate school, finds valuable.

"Professors have sort of a mission to engage with the curious," Fram said. "I think it's good to make some space for the activity of learning as a human activity, something for its own sake."

For Dickinson, auditors create a symbiotic relationship between professors, registered students, and themselves, bringing new perspectives to a relatively homogenous, 18-22-year-old student body.

"Because they have experiences that my undergraduates have obviously not yet undergone, the auditors often provide useful insights and much needed corrections to things my undergraduates think they understand," Dickinson wrote in an email to The Campus. "I think everyone benefits from having them in a class – particularly me!"

Amid growing tensions over grade inflation and career pressures, community auditors represent a small, but persistent, group interested in classes in and of themselves.

Domino's debut drives sales decline at the Grille, prompts innovation

Continued from Page 1

Director of Retail Operations Justin Edson said in an interview with the Campus. "We're still happy, we're just seeing the shift of when people are coming in. We're keeping up with last year's sales, we're just seeing a shift from nights to days. As soon as Domino's opened, we saw a large dip in [evening] sales. There's no denying it, it's happening."

According to Edson, the Grille's pizza sales decreased by 53% last week compared to that same week last year.

Staff have also noticed changes in demand.

"My staff has mentioned that in the past, they would be making two or three of each flavors of pizza a night. Lately, we've been doing one of our daily specials, and then a half-and-half cheese-pepperoni pizza," Lauren Poppenga, The Grille's evening manager, said in an interview with The Campus.

Poppenga added that the decline in traffic has led to operational adjustments.

"We've definitely seen a drop in sales to the point where we've had to cut staff, which is unfortunate, because a lot of our staff are students that rely on jobs on campus," Poppenga said. "We've also cut menu items like our stir fry and our buffalo chicken egg rolls because people haven't been coming in to order them."

To respond to the increased competition, retail operations are considering changes.

"We have talked about bringing back some sort of delivery service for The Grille," Poppenga said. "Nothing is certain yet, though."

Domino's delivery service has been particularly appealing during the winter, given the cold weather.

"I like Domino's because of the convenience. In this cold, the delivery is great. I've never picked up my order, I always get it delivered," Sarah LaFond '27 said.

Edson said the timing of Domino's arrival amplified its impact.

"This is one of the coldest winters we've had in like 15 years," Edson said. "Delivery is a great option. So what we're looking at is figuring out how we can compete with that. We're not promising anything, but we're talking about how to accommodate more locality on campus for folks."

"I think it's great that students have access to something like Domino's that is open late. I just wish there were more local opportunities being taken advantage of, particularly here at The Grille," Poppenga added. "But right now, we're toying with the idea of doing late-night desserts."

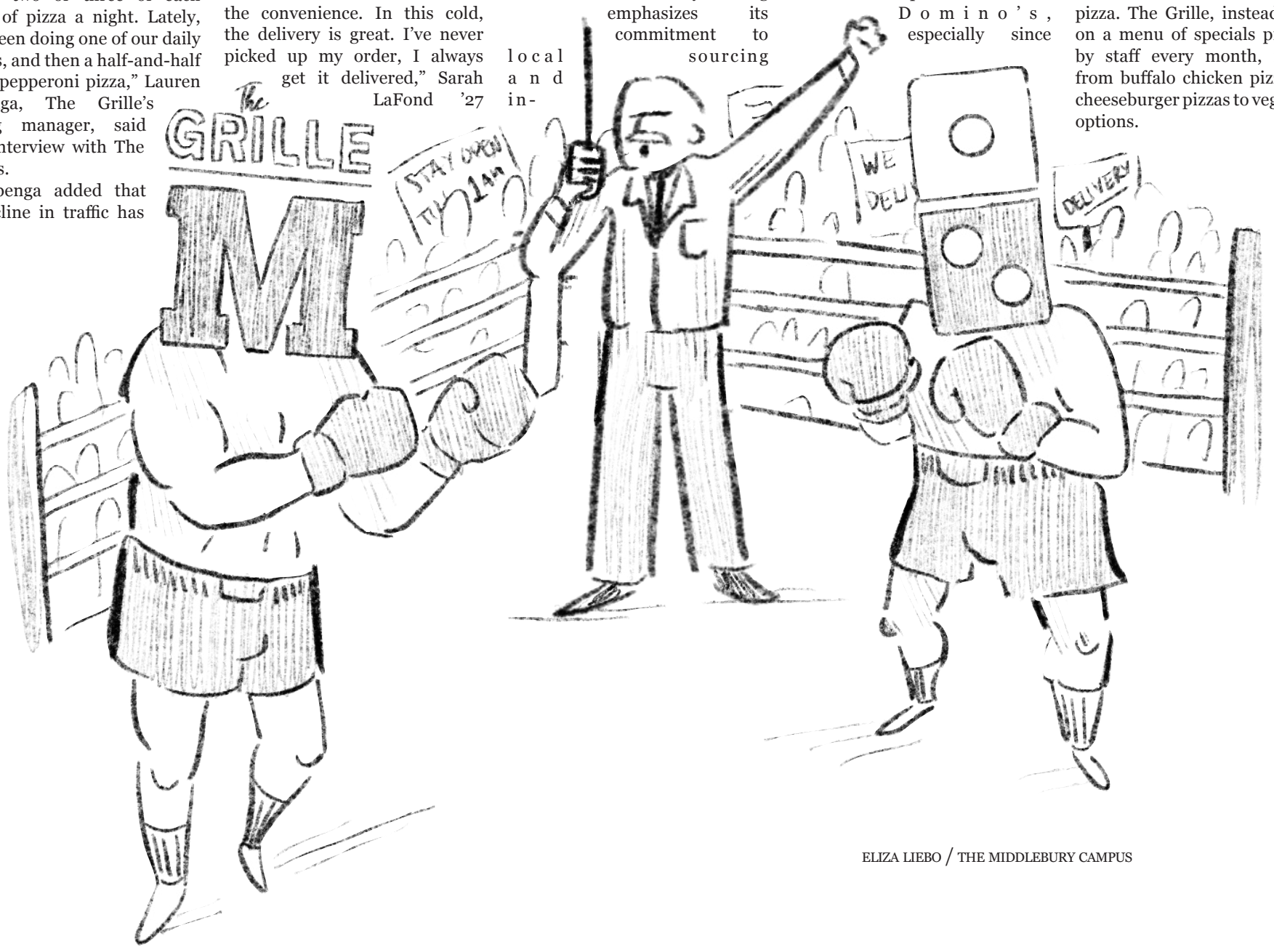
Middlebury Dining emphasizes its commitment to local and in-house preparation. According to the Middlebury Dining website, 32% of the annual food budget is spent locally on vegetable farms, dairies, maple syrup producers, cheese cooperatives, fair trade coffee roasters, organic soy growers and grass-fed cattle raisers.

"A large percentage of our products on campus in general and here at The Grille are local," Poppenga said. "We are utilizing local beef, local eggs and local dairy. In the summer, we utilize the Knoll and also local farmers. We make all of our own sauces. It's not coming out of a factory."

"Here at The Grille [...] we strive to make everything fresh," Edson added. "We've always used the best products we can find. All our chicken and beef is high-quality meat. It's hard to compete with Domino's, especially since it's two different products. We are all about serving the students. We try to serve the best we can."

"We are the only facility on campus that makes our own pizza dough from scratch. It's something that one of our employees, Jeff, has been very proud of. He's worked really hard on the recipes for over a year, trying to nail them down for these pizzas, and it's been hard to compete with Domino's," Poppenga said.

The Domino's website provides some information on the sourcing of their food: "We rely on farmers, suppliers and processors, as well as our supply chain division, in our mission to provide the highest quality and safest food possible." According to the website, Domino's offers 34 million different combinations available when ordering one pizza. The Grille, instead, relies on a menu of specials prepared by staff every month, ranging from buffalo chicken pizzas and cheeseburger pizzas to vegetarian options.



ELIZA LIEBO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

MIDDLEBURY RESIDENTS APPROVE A 15.9 MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET, RAISING THE PROPERTY TAX RATE BY 9.97%

By ELISABETH DELLIT
Staff Writer

On March 2nd, Middlebury residents gathered in Middlebury Union High School Auditorium to participate in the annual Town Hall Meeting Day. A cherished Green Mountain State tradition since 1762, the local town hall usually takes place in the first week of March, with community members voting on local issues.

Town and school district budgets and ballot items remain essential issues at the town hall. On Monday night, Articles One through Four were taken to vote, while Articles Six through Eight were left for Tuesday night, the second night of voting.

Middlebury voters showed unanimous support for all four articles on the 2026 Town Meeting Warning. Key approvals included the adoption of the Town Officers' reports (Article One) and the FY2027 General Fund budget of $15,998,046 (Article Two). Voters also authorized the Selectboard to reallocate $350,000 from the Cross Street Bridge Reserve Fund to support the Ilsley Library Project (Article Three) and finalized the property tax collection dates for the 2026/2027 fiscal year (Article Four).

The ballot for the following day, March 3rd, featured three additional measures. Article Six secured $1.5 million for the critical replacement of the Foote Street Water Main. Article Seven called on the Vermont General Assembly to prioritize legislative action on H.433 during the 2026 session. Finally, Article Eight finalized the leadership for the coming year with the election of eleven town officials, including key representatives for the Selectboard and the Ilsley Library Board of Trustees.

Laura Asermily, a townsmember from Middlebury, was in attendance and remarked on the importance of this patriotic tradition.

"I always look forward to town meetings. It is a very important civic opportunity for us to come together and understand our town's priorities and give feedback," Arsermily said.

This year's Town Hall commenced promptly at 7:00 pm.

The evening opened with Article One, highlighted by a tribute to Selectboard member Brian Carpenter. Another Selectboard member, Dan Brown, dedicated the 2025 Town Report to Carpenter in recognition of his nearly two decades of public service to Middlebury. Carpenter accepted the honor with a humble smile and a nod as the assembly rose for a standing ovation.

The meeting moved swiftly to Article Two, with a proposal to increase the 2027 Fiscal Year Budget (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027) by 9.9% to $15,998,045. This larger budget will require a 9.97% increase in the municipal property tax rate, taking it to $1.0226 per $100 in property value.

The tax rate increase is not insignificant, as most general fund revenue comes from local property taxes. Over 10,000,000 dollars of the budget is to be raised by local taxes. The spending plan also calls for a 2.15% increase in the district's education property tax rate, which is currently $1.62 per $100 in property value.

The Middlebury Town Manager, Mark Pruhenski, noted that the major drivers of the budget are the Public Safety and Public Works Departments, as well as technology (IT) upgrades to support the town's cybersecurity, hardware and software needs. Pruhenski also discussed the difficulty of maintaining the services the community has come to depend on and the tax burden on constituents, explaining that the Selectboard did its best to manage both with care.

Janet Smith, a new resident of Middlebury, voiced her concern for the tax rate increase, drawing a laugh as she expressed her awe at the lack of outrage by her new fellow town members.

"A nearly 10% tax increase where I come from is huge! I mean, people didn't pass out or anything when they saw that number. Do you see another 10% tax increase coming along next year?" Smith said to the crowd.

To Smith's question, Pruhenski said he saw some challenging years ahead, but hoped that there would be no more double-digit increase in property taxes.

Despite the budget passing, some community members wanted further explanation of where all the money was being allocated.

At the end of the town hall, Asermily expressed her wish for greater clarity and dialogue surrounding the increasingly large budget.

"I'd love to hear a little bit more from our department heads about, you know, the world that they're doing that informs the budget. I don't think we really got that tonight, except with the library. Maybe an opportunity to hear from some of our committees, like the Energy Committee, who have displays out here," Asermily said.

Community members also voiced concerns about Middlebury College's reduction in annual gifts to the town, housing and population issues, and the increase in the Middlebury Police Department's budget.

State Sen. Ruth Hardy of Addison County gave her constituents an update on news from Montpelier. Hardy outlined last year's major education reform bill, Act 73, and explained how the Finance Committee in Montpelier is doing all that it can to reduce school costs and property taxes. She also discussed Act 55, a healthcare bill to lower insurance rates, and the state government's fight to keep costs low amid the national government's cuts to subsidies.

ELISABETH DELLIT / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On March 2nd, Middlebury residents gathered in Middlebury Union High School Auditorium to participate in the annual Town Hall Meeting Day.

Towards the end of the evening, the town hall shifted to discussing Article Seven. Middlebury was among only eight other towns to vote Tuesday on a petition to ask the Vermont Legislature to take action on H.433. The bill, if passed in Montpelier, would secure universal primary care in Vermont through Green Mountain Care, a publicly financed health care program available to all Vermont residents.

Jack Mayer, a Middlebury resident and pediatrician, co-authored the petition and expressed his fervent belief in the right to primary care at the town hall meeting.

"This petition is merely asking for this measure to be debated, for us to have a conversation about the question of whether we are going to provide primary care for every Vermonter, to do it out of public funding instead of relying on a dysfunctional and failed insurance and for-profit system that we have for providing healthcare in place now," Mayer said.

Hoping to set an example for other states, Mayer sees a step towards universal healthcare as essential to meeting the needs of Vermonters, who can increasingly not afford preventative healthcare. He also noted that a lack of primary care often leads to increased emergency room visits and irreversible health conditions.

"Healthcare is, as we are finding out, sadly, not a commodity. It's a human right, and we in Vermont are now at a tipping point. Of 33 major industrialized countries in the world, 32 of them have some form of universal national health insurance. Our country is the only one that does not. This is criminal," Mayer said.

At the conclusion of his campaign to convince the people of Middlebury to support H.433, Mayer struck a historical tone, saying, "I just want to close with something that Winston Churchill said about Americans, which he said, 'Americans always do the right thing after they've tried everything else.'"

FIRST VERMONT CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL TO COME TO TOWN HALL THEATER MARCH 15

By PHOEBE ADLER
Contributing Writer

The first annual Vermont Chocolate Festival, presented by Adagio Chocolates, will take place Sat. March 15 at Town Hall Theater in downtown Middlebury. The weekend-long event will feature tastings, demonstrations and educational programming centered on ethically sourced chocolate.

Festivities begin Friday, March 14 at 6:30 p.m. with a chocolate tasting followed by a screening of "Peace by Chocolate" (2021), a film that follows a young Syrian refugee rebuilding his life in a small Canadian town after his family's chocolate factory is destroyed in a bombing.

Saturday's main event will include chocolate-themed games, s'more-making in the Maloney Plaza and raffles featuring premium chocolate prizes. Attendees will have opportunities to meet chocolate makers, learn about sourcing and flavor profiles and sample products from vendors across Vermont and neighboring states.

Adagio Chocolates, a boutique shop that opened in 2024, specializes in ethically sourced chocolate and Vermont-made sweets. Owner and co-founder Allan Sirotkin said the festival reflects the store's broader mission.

"A lot of our mission is to be educational and transparent about chocolate [and] to let you know where the chocolate comes from and how the chocolate is made. This festival is to celebrate chocolate, which is incredible," Sirotkin said in an interview with The Campus.

Sirotkin, who has been in the chocolate industry for several decades, founded Adagio Chocolates with Hanna Loeffler, a Managing Partner and the festival's primary event planner. Since the business's opening in 2024, Adagio Chocolates has aimed to serve the Middlebury community with delicious, ethically sourced chocolate from around the world.

"I went to several different chocolate festivals to kind of get a sense of what they look like. I'd been to them before, but [I was] really kind of keeping an eye out for what's working and what's not working so well, " Loeffler said.

Loeffler, who has been preparing for this festival since January, emphasized the effort and planning that went into the event. According to Loeffler, building and maintaining connections was central to bringing the festival together.

"It's an awful lot of connections. It's reaching out to connections. It's building on connections that you already have, reaching out to the people that you already know, and be like, 'Hey, can you get me an intro to this person?'" Loeffler said.

Beyond tastings, Loeffler hopes the festival encourages attendees to think critically about the global chocolate industry.

"I would love it if people tried something new and felt stretched by it," she said. "And this is not just chocolate specific, but just, is there something that we as humans could be doing better for other humans, for the environment, that will maybe, in tiny baby ways, make the world a little bit better?"

Admission for the Vermont Chocolate Festival is free for children 12 and under, with a Family Pass of 10% off when purchasing 4 or more tickets. Admissions packages range: there's a $20 Student Admission and a $30 General Admission, providing access to all demos and presentations, and 1 chocolate tasting, a $50 Generous General Admission, providing access to the same events, or a $100 VIP package, providing access to the same events and includes all chocolate tastings and an exclusive VIP Maker's Breakfast and a VIP Special Tasting, both of which will occur on March 16.

Middlebury student Jackson McKersie '26 shared his excitement for the festival.

"Middlebury is amazing, but the winters can become isolating and drawn out. It's nice that we have community events like this to bring energy and connection to a time of year that can feel pretty empty," McKersie said.

In addition, there are several add-on options for ticket holders: a $10 tasting add-on that includes an additional chocolate tasting, and a $20 special tasting add-on that grants admission to the Sunday morning Special Tasting.

Editor's note: Staff Writer Anna Doucet '26 contributed reporting to this article.

PHOEBE ADLER / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The first annual Vermont Chocolate Festival, presented by Adagio Chocolates, will be held on Saturday, March 15, at the Town Hall Theater in downtown Middlebury

ACAPELLA GROUP THE DISSIPATED EIGHT PERFORMS AT BRANDON TOWN HALL DURING TWELFTH ANNUAL CONCERT

KATRINA SCHWARZ / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Dissipated Eight Members, from left to right: Xander Bowles '26, Quinn Donaldson '26.5, Will '29.5, Nate Keshan '28, Caeden Sung-Frederickson '27.5, Graeme Evans '28, Jefferson Adams-López '28.5, Rabih Abboud '28, Will Dyer '27, Surya Patel '29, Nick Christoforakis '29, Leo Katowitz '28, Jack O'Neil '28.5, Henry Dejanikus '29 and Will Mortell '26.

By KATRINA SCHWARZ & ANNA DOUCET

Senior Local Editor & Staff Writer

On Saturday, Feb. 28th, Middlebury College's oldest acapella group, The Dissipated Eight (D8), sang (and debuted their stand-up comedy routine) to a small but lively crowd of college students, parents and local community members at Brandon Town Hall.

D8 has performed at the Brandon Town Hall for 12 years, a tradition established through a long-standing partnership with Dennis Marden, the former president of the Friends of the Brandon Town Hall (FoBTH). He first heard about the group through a Brandon local and Middlebury parent, and, after seeing them perform, decided to invite D8 to perform at the town hall.

"She [the parent] said you have to go to see this group, so I did, and twelve years later, here we are," Marden said in an interview with The Campus.

Marden and the FoBTH also played a major role in the rescue and renovation of the Town Hall itself, explaining that it had sat empty for 30 years and was going to be replaced with a parking lot by the town.

"We just started to raise money, we wrote grants, Brandon is amazing in the fact that they support this place. This is where town meetings used to be, so 1861 is when it was built," Marden said.

Now, the Town Hall has different leadership under Bill Moore, the current Recreation Director, Deputy Town Manager, and Economic Fulfillment Officer of the town of Brandon. He took over management of the space from FoBTH this past year.

"With the example set by the Friends of the Town Hall, we really try to have a diverse set of offerings. Two weeks from now, we're going to have an aikido demonstration that will be up here, and three weeks from now, we've got Brandon Idol, our homegrown musical singing competition," Moore said.

Xander Bowles '26, the group's current music director, shared his enthusiasm for the annual event.

"I just really love performing at the Brandon Town Hall. We showcase the best that D8 has to offer in a two-hour set that never disappoints, or so we hope," Bowles said.

D8 was founded in 1952, originally as a barbershop octet with only seven members. Over more than seventy years, the group has expanded, incorporating new music styles and performing across New England and beyond. The group periodically travels to recording studios and has recorded several albums together. Their most recent Extended Play (EP), "Careful Now" was released in September 2024. D8 holds auditions each semester and currently has 15 active members. Adorned in suits and with a deep love of music and one another, the group has become a staple on Middlebury's Campus, performing at the semesterly Jambo alongside six other Acapella groups and at the spring arts festival Nocturne, amongst others.

"As a group, we always try to maintain a sense of history and tradition in everything we do. A given show will have multiple songs that we have been performing continuously since our founding, and our close relationship with our network of alumni ensures that we stay connected to our roots," William Mortell '26 said.

While they are a singing group, D8 is also passionate about community engagement. Along with singing at community venues such as the Brandon Town Hall, they perform at high schools and retirement centers such as the Residence at Shelburne Bay.

D8 Business Manager Graeme Evans '28 oversees planning and scheduling D8 shows.

"It's always just a lot of fun to get to share our music with people, and that's really why we do it at the end of the day. Whenever we go into the community to high schools or other venues, we want to inspire younger people and show them what singing can be like post-high school," Evans said.

Will Igoe '29.5 is a new member of D8, having joined just a few weeks ago.

"I love the energy of the group, I think it's a very positive, fun, welcoming and close group. I love music, I love singing, and the guys are so talented, so it's really fun to sing with them, and I love our final product," said Igoe. "I love performing in community spaces, I feel like that's what music is for," he added.

The group performed a 16-song set, followed by a 17th song as an encore. The set list included several 'oldies', songs featured in movie soundtracks, and the group's original song "Oxygen."

Audience members were thrilled by the set list, especially some of the solos by various members. Julian Simon, parent of D8 member Henry Dejanikus '28, said that his favorite part of the show was when the group sang Boondocks, originally by Little Big Town, and soloed by Bowles.

"Xander does that so incredibly well. It's really beautiful," Simon said.

Another popular feature of the set was the comedic element that D8 seamlessly incorporated into their musical repertoire.

"My favorite part was the comedic aspect of the show," Annika Morrison said, a student at Williams College who visited for the concert.

These aspects included individual introductions from all group members. Keeping up with a longstanding D8 tradition, their introductions were full of inside jokes and fictitious stories about themselves. Nathan Keshen '28 fibbed that he was a classically trained Irish dancer, while Bowles announced that he didn't know how to tie his shoes. He does, in fact, know how to tie his shoes.

"I sing a lot of wrong notes," Bowles added.

"Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman, arranged by Mortell, a long time fan favorite, was not included in the Brandon setlist, much to the disappointment of some dedicated Middlebury fans.

"I always love when they sing Tracy Chapman's Fast Car," D8 fan Eleanor Harrison '26 said. "Wanting to hear it is what brought me out tonight. It's such a beautiful arrangement, and always makes me emotional," she said.

Towards the end of D8's performance, Quinn Donaldson '26.5 leapt from the stage and led the group in serenading a randomly selected member of the audience. The singers surrounded their chosen fan, with Evans even sitting on his lap. D8 typically performs at least one serenade per show, much to the audience's delight.

Students who wish to attend D8's next performance at the Brandon Town Hall can mark their calendars for April 10th, when the group will be performing at the space in conjunction with other Middlebury acapella groups.

Editor's Note: Managing Editor Yuvraj Shah '26 contributed reporting to this article.

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HEADPHONES: ARE WE TRYING TO SHUT OUT THE WORLD?

Op-Ed

Katherine Goodman *is a member of the class of 2028.*

On any given walk to class, the campus feels quiet — not because it is silent, but because so many of us are plugged in. AirPods in, eyes forward, moving through shared space while listening to something entirely private.

It sends a subtle signal: I'm occupied. I'm elsewhere. Don't interrupt. Without saying a word, it establishes a boundary. Headphones may be normal. But they are not neutral.

A few days ago, I passed a friend on campus. We exchanged quick hellos. Later that day, she told me she had asked a question after saying hi — one I completely missed because I was listening to music. I wasn't trying to ignore her. But I was unavailable.

This interaction matters in a moment when many college students are already struggling to find connection. Rising rates of anxiety, depression and burnout have reshaped the landscape of college life. Nearly 60% of college students report struggling with their mental health, self-esteem and finding purpose and connection. One survey found that 57% of students report feeling lonely.

At the same time, small, in-person interactions are quietly disappearing. With the rise of digital communication, we often rush through daily exchanges — grabbing coffee without eye contact, scrolling while waiting for class and offering a quick nod instead of a conversation. These moments may seem insignificant, but research consistently shows that casual interactions contribute meaningfully to happiness and well-being.

Psychologists call this "relational diversity" — maintaining a varied portfolio of relationships, beyond friends and family, including coworkers, classmates and others. Research shows that those who engage regularly across different social circles report feeling less lonely. Fulfillment grows from everyday encounters, not just deep ties.

Public spaces allow us to see and be seen. A small greeting, a smile, a follow-up question after "hello" — these moments can transform transactions into interactions. This is where headphones complicate things.

Headphones can make public spaces feel more private. There's something quietly amusing about walking to class thinking, No one would ever guess I'm blasting EDM at 8:30 a.m. right now. It can feel comforting — carrying a hidden soundtrack through shared space.

And to be clear, headphones are not inherently negative. For many students, they are a tool for focus, comfort and stress regulation. The spring semester is demanding. Assignments pile up. Labs feel endless. Midterms loom. Music can steady us, motivate us and help us move through the day.

But when we are constantly plugged in, we reduce the likelihood of spontaneous connection. We limit the chance of overhearing something interesting. We miss the casual question after a passing hello.

In an era of constant input — from social media, streaming platforms, notifications — headphones can extend that stream of stimulation. They allow us to avoid sitting alone with our thoughts.

Over February break, I discovered this accidentally. Settling into my airplane seat to return to campus, I opened my AirPods case and found two empty slots. I had left them in the car. I panicked at the thought of travelling from Wyoming to Vermont without headphones. But it turned out to be one of the calmest travel days I've had in a long time. I read. I finished my homework. I felt less scattered and more present.

In a time when more than half of college students report feeling lonely, it's worth asking what we might miss when we are always plugged in. Headphones give us control. They give us privacy. They give us a soundtrack to stressful semesters.

But maybe every once in a while, it's worth taking them out — just to see what happens.

FROM MIDDLEBURY TO SARAJEVO: STUDENTS MUST TURN VALUES INTO ACTION

Op-Ed

Alem Hadzic *is a member of the class of 2026.*

Imagine a family in rural Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have a four-year-old child who has just recently been diagnosed with cancer. The nearest hospital cannot provide the treatment their child urgently needs. The best pediatric oncology care is in the capital, Sarajevo, which is hours away. They are not only afraid for their child and this diagnosis, but are also worried about everything that comes with it. How will they afford to get to Sarajevo? Where will they stay? If they already struggle to make ends meet, how will they cover the time away from home? For many of us here at Middlebury, crises like these may feel distant. Bosnia and Herzegovina is ultimately thousands of miles away from our campus. However, I would argue that distance does not determine responsibility. If we pride ourselves on global citizenship, service, and engagement, these values must extend beyond our classrooms and should translate into action.

This is exactly where Udruženje Srce za djecu oboljelu od raka (Association "Heart for the kids with cancer") comes in. They provide housing near treatment centers so families do not have to worry about where they will sleep during the child's treatment. Further, the association provides psychosocial support for children and families, educational resources, and community-building for those who often feel isolated during one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. In short, they allow parents to focus on what matters the most: their child receiving cancer treatment.

As the son of refugees from the Bosnian War, I grew up understanding both hardship and opportunity. I was raised on stories focused on displacement and survival, but also on gratitude for my education here in the United States. Now, I have the privilege of studying at Middlebury College, an institution that largely emphasizes global citizenship and student leadership. This privilege that we have carries an obligation. Middlebury goes beyond teaching about the world and actually prepares us to engage with it. The true question is whether we as students are willing to act on what we claim to value.

Last year, I partnered with the Red Cross in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by running the RBC Brooklyn Half Marathon, raising over $8,300 to support vulnerable communities. Through Middlebury CCI support, I later interned in Bosnia and Herzegovina, seeing firsthand how the funds were used to make a tangible difference. That experience reshaped how I understand sport, shifting it from a competition-only focus to a powerful bridge between communities. Most importantly, it reinforced my belief that student-led action can create tangible differences when backed by collective support.

This is exactly where we, as a Middlebury community, can step in. This March, I am launching a humanitarian fundraising campaign in an official partnership with Srce za djecu. On March 21st, I will run the Mostar Half Marathon to raise funds to support these children battling cancer and their families. Throughout the month, I will document my training, fundraising journey, race experience and time connecting with the organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I aim to raise $13,100 for the symbolic 13.1 miles I will run in Mostar for these children. However, this campaign is not just about the race. The larger question is what kind of campus community we want to be. Middlebury has the capacity to mobilize for different humanitarian efforts around the world. Our networks, resources and student body are committed to engagement. When we support initiatives like this, we demonstrate that our values are practiced.

During March, I will organize campus events to bring this mission to life in our community. For those who love sports, I will be hosting a 3v3 soccer tournament, with all registration fees going directly toward the campaign and, ultimately, Srce za djecu. For those who want another way to contribute, we will also hold a card-writing and video-recording event, where students can send personal messages to these children and families. These events intentionally connect our campus to communities beyond it.

Every donation is significant, and every shared conversation expands our reach. The community we gather for this greater good will affirm that Middlebury does more than just speak about impact, as it creates it.

Crossing the finish line in Mostar will mean more than just finishing a race. It will mark a full-circle moment, as we launch a campaign on our campus and conclude it in the country where these children and families are being supported. The distance between Middlebury and Sarajevo is measurable in miles and kilometers, but our willingness to act is immeasurable.

If members of the Middlebury community are serious about global citizenship, then we must also be intentional about translating these values into action. Those 13.1 miles are a measurable distance, but what we choose to do with our opportunities and privileges as a community is not. Each student at Middlebury has passions and talents that can have a meaningful impact if we are willing to use them.

Editors Note: The Feb 26th print edition included an incorrect title for an op-ed by Laila Almefty-Hernandez '26.

The correct title is: *SPECS Panther - Naming and honoring Black innovators in the field of sexual health.*

The online version reflects the correct title.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM YOUR SGA PRESIDENT

Op-Ed

***Nicole Meyers** is a member of the class of 2026.*

Dear Students, in response to the op-ed published on Feb. 19th, I would like to highlight some of SGA's current initiatives. I am aware of how important transparency is in effective governance, and in our last semester together, I will make an effort to improve SGA's communication with the student body.

This commitment to transparency starts with this op-ed. First, several of the initiatives mentioned in the op-ed as part of President B Striker's '25 administration have become a core part of my goals for this year. Chief among these is establishing an improved system of to-go containers. The Campus has previously reported that we lose over $45,000 in plates annually, and low usage of our current to-go system is a key driver. I've conducted extensive conversations with Student Affairs and Dining to work towards a long-term solution. Due to campus-wide budget cuts, Middlebury Dining Services and SGA were unable to secure funding to bring new to-go containers originally planned for the fall semester without cutting other programming, such as 10 O'Clock Ross. Our goal is to include a new system in next fiscal year's budget, which will be approved by the Board of Trustees in May. As a short-term measure, we have collaborated with Dining to expand the sale of to-go containers and carabiners to the dining halls, augmenting their point of sale beyond MiddExpress. More details are available in a schoolwide email sent on Feb. 23rd or our Instagram post.

To address the uncertainty of the current political moment, I have collaborated with the SGA Senate, the SAS Grants office, and immigration lawyers to create an SGA Immigration Legal Support Fund. For the spring semester, $10,000 has been allocated from our SGA reserve fund to provide students with access to immigration legal advice. Students are eligible to receive up to $1,500 from the SGA Immigration Legal Support Fund and can apply through the SAS grants process. SGA is fully prepared to support the fund in the long term, so students do not face financial barriers to accessing these essential resources.

We'll also be sharing more details about the legal support fund at the SGA x Firewall Know Your Rights (KYR) Day on March 11th. Contrary to reports that the SGA failed to consider student input from Firewall for Freedom and other student activists, we are wholly committed to uplifting and representing student voices. SGA remains a close collaborator with Firewall, and we meet regularly to discuss student concerns in this challenging political climate. We respect and appreciate their advocacy for the student body, and we're excited to co-host KYR Day with them. On March 11th, we will distribute Know Your Rights cards along with information from administrators about Middlebury's response to federal officials on campus. Students will also have the opportunity to share anonymous feedback on the college's response to current events, which we will convey to Student Affairs and the Board. We are also hosting a Q&A session with immigration lawyer Dan Berger at 4 p.m. in Davis 150A/B, who will share more specific information about civil rights and immigration law.

To conclude my tenure as SGA president, my administration is currently working on the following initiatives:

Prioritizing communication with the student body through social media and other avenues.

Beginning conversations with the new office of Student Success to ensure that there is an online booking system in place for next fall.

Hosting Staff and Faculty Appreciation Day in April to show our appreciation for the people who make Middlebury.

Reviving the All-School Picnic from pre-Covid as an opportunity for community building among students, faculty and staff.

Increasing the number of water bottle fillers on campus by gathering information on necessary locations and submitting an expenditure request for next year's budget.

Continuing to support students in the current political climate as needed.

If you have any feedback on these initiatives or have ideas on what issues we should address next, we would love to hear from you. Please reach out to us at sga@middlebury.edu, @middsga on Instagram, or Go/HeySGA/ (for an anonymous option). To follow our progress on these initiatives throughout the semester, please refer to our semester planning document, which we'll update regularly. We also invite you all to attend our General Assembly meetings, which are held from 7–9 p.m. biweekly in Johnson 204 (the next one is on March 17th). This is a challenging moment for Middlebury and colleges across the country, and I will make every effort to support you all.

Sincerely,
Nicole Meyers
Your SGA President
(on behalf of the Middlebury College Student Government Association)

THE VALUE OF AN A-GRADE

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Middlebury's Economics Department recently set a new department-wide threshold of 95% for receiving an A-grade. As we recently reported, this policy change stemmed from concerns about grade inflation, which has prompted us to ask: What is the value of an A?

As a selective college with a competitive admissions process, Middlebury is populated with students who are already smart and high-achieving. It's not necessarily surprising that these students earn high grades, given the highly competitive college application process. But if everyone is getting an A, what does an A mean? Is it a measure of excellence or capitulation to students and their anxieties regarding their GPA?

In some ways, the Economics Department faces a distinct challenge: Economics and International Politics & Economics majors together account for over 20% of students with declared majors who are on campus this spring. Bigger class sizes and more majors trying to fill requirements can make it harder to maintain rigorous, individualized grading standards and create pressure to hand out high grades. With many of these students recruiting for finance and consulting jobs beginning in their sophomore year, economics classes can become transactional rather than valuable in their own right. The desire to have a competitive resume when applying to jobs often trumps students' willingness to take academic risks, leaving economics classrooms often feeling devoid of genuine interest in the subject matter.

However, the problem of grade inflation is not unique to the economics department, and it is inextricably tied to the rise of AI models, which diminish the effectiveness of take-home assignments like essays and problem sets as grading tools. One of the cornerstones of a liberal arts education is the development of critical thinking skills through assignments that reward sustained engagement with the material and careful argumentation. Professors who are most concerned about AI are increasingly being forced to confront grade inflation at the same time, because the two problems are deeply intertwined. If professors can no longer rely on out-of-class written work to be an accurate representation of how much students have learned and thought about the material, these assignments are no longer effective grading tools.

There is also a collective action problem that makes it feel futile for any single institution to address grade inflation unilaterally. Middlebury is just one of many competitive colleges which are also giving their students a large number of A's. Although Harvard has undertaken a public grade deflation campaign, schools with lower national profiles don't want to be the first ones to deflate grades and disadvantage their students in the job market, especially because news about a grade deflation policy change at a small liberal arts school is unlikely to reach many recruiters. There is a clear incentive to continue giving students high grades so they remain employed in attractive fields after graduation and thus attract more prospective students.

We also have to think about what grades mean to students themselves. For many of us, college represents a stressful limbo: We are investing large amounts of money and time and often feel immense pressure to make this investment worthwhile by being successful. Grade-point average is a clear measure of success that signals to employers that you are smart and capable, and signals to yourself that you are "making the most" of your education. Given these pressures, students are incentivized to enroll in easier classes and treat each course as an opportunity to check a box rather than an opportunity for intellectual growth.

Grades were designed to communicate something meaningful about a student's mastery of material — in most institutions in previous generations, a B-grade would indicate satisfactory performance, but to many students today, it would be received as a failure. Despite Middlebury students' fear of bad grades, several of us on the Editorial Board noted that we learned the most from classes we were willing to struggle in. Part of this conversation requires students to reflect and ask ourselves questions, chief among them: What are we here for? College is one of the few places designed for curiosity, where you can take a class completely unrelated to your major or misunderstand a concept publicly and have the opportunity to learn from it. If we are all too scared to take risks for fear of poor grades, we are losing something valuable about the college experience that is difficult to replicate anywhere else.

We call for a more nuanced conversation about grading standards beyond letter grades or percentage cutoffs. We need to reckon with how work is assessed in the age of AI. As pre-professional culture encroaches on academic life here at Middlebury, we must also reflect on what it means to receive a liberal arts education. There are real institutional and financial incentives which contribute to grade inflation, and policies to address it must also recognize the pressure that students are under to get a job after graduation and create an environment where they feel safe failing. The value of an A lies not in its scarcity but in the fact that it represents genuine intellectual growth and engagement, and it will require effort from all of us to ensure that our academic culture reflects that.

The Middlebury Campus

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"HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN FROM BELFAST": A MYSTERIOUS THRILLER DISGUISED IN IRISH HUMOR AND EARLY 2000'S SMASH HITS

By PHOEBE ADLER
Contributing Writer

Picture this: you're watching the final minutes of episode six of Netflix's newest murder mystery – and after 45 minutes of suspense, you're on the edge of your seat. Dead silence on screen – until t.A.T.u's "All the Things She Said" starts blasting and the credits start rolling.

While its plot line is not exactly the same as "Heated Rivalry," the show whose quick rise to fame initially caused the 2002 anthem to trend online, "How to Get to Heaven from Belfast" is not to be missed. Three years after the conclusion of her wildly successful series "Derry Girls," Lisa McGee's return to the screen is messy, hilarious and full of unexpected turns.

The show follows three middle-aged women: Saoirse (Roisin Gallaher), a successful TV writer, Dara (Caoilfhionn Dunne) who primarily stays home to take care of her mother, and Robin (Sinéad Keenan), a stay-at-home mother of three children. When the girls hear about the passing of Greta (Emma Canning), an old friend from school with whom they'd lost touch, the women decide to attend her wake to pay their respects. However, the women are also hiding a secret — and travelling to Greta's wake is a form of damage control to ensure that the secret is not revealed. Following Greta's wake, progressively strange events occur, and an eerie question arises: is Greta actually dead?

Similar to "Derry Girls," the show is also based in Northern Ireland — and includes several homages to McGee's home country. From characters complaining about forgetting euros while crossing the border into the Republic of Ireland, to "The Ponderosa", also known as Ireland's Highest Bar & Restaurant, receiving a shoutout after a scene was filmed there, there is no shortage of Northern Irish content. However, there is more to "How to Get to Heaven from Belfast" than a series of gripes only some can relate to.

It's no secret that we've seen a huge increase in true crime series in the past decade, many of which are based on actual events. "How to Get to Heaven from Belfast" certainly plays into this trend as Greta's mysterious death/disappearance unfolds throughout the series, but McGee personalises it through her tone, which she referred to in a Variety as "fast and chaotic and Irish and funny." Taking inspiration from television shows such as "Murder, She Wrote," McGee delivers her own take on a murder mystery thriller, but manages to balance it with wit, humor and female friendship.

The show includes many twists and turns, which is quite similar to how I felt whilst watching it. As a longtime "Derry Girls" fan (and an avid rewatcher of the show), I was thrilled to see that McGee had created a new series. In watching this show, however, I found myself going through conflicting ups and downs. The season has eight episodes, which are approximately 50 minutes each, which I felt were a bit long, especially compared to the on-average 25 minute-long episodes of "Derry Girls." Understandably, it is difficult to condense a genre like thriller into shorter episodes, and with material substantially less light-hearted than that of "Derry Girls," longer episodes are needed. However, I do not think that a 50-minute runtime was necessary for every episode.

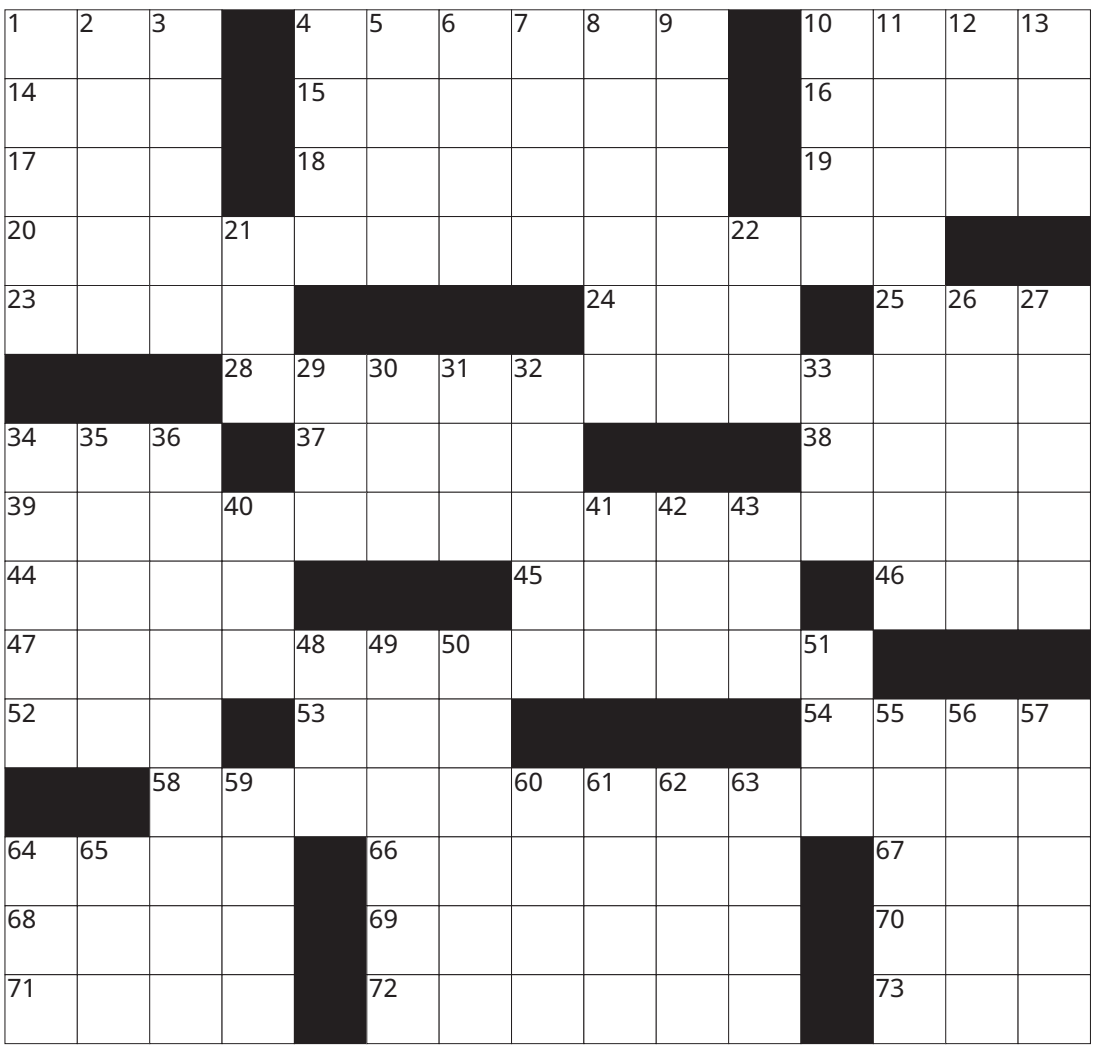
Additionally, with longer episodes I found myself getting confused with the subject material. McGee's world-building is one of her strongest suits as a writer, but mixing comedy and murder can be a slippery slope. As previously detailed, I think McGee balances these two genres well generally, but especially in the middle of the season, it is easy to get caught up with smaller scenes that did not entirely make sense in the long run.

"How to Get to Heaven from Belfast."
COURTESY PHOTOS / HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN FROM BELFAST

Overall, I consider "How to Get to Heaven From Belfast" to be a triumphant return for McGee. While viewers should not go into this series expecting something as deeply personal as "Derry Girls" (instead of writing alone, McGee had the assistance of a writers' room in creating "How to Get to Heaven From Belfast"), they should watch it for the plot twists, Irish humor, enduring spirit of sisterhood amongst the women, and of course, to see how many familiar faces from "Derry Girls" they can spot (hint: there's more than just Saoirse-Monica Jackson, who guest stars as Feeney).

Spring Forward

Avery Goldstein



ACROSS
1 "Truthfully," in a text
4 Slaps
10 Dalmatian feature
14 "Float like a butterfly" boxer
15 Giggling sound
16 Musical finale
17 Unruly head of hair
18 Tel Aviv's land
19 Amazed
20 Folded flyers released in "Heavy Metal Dream Police"
23 Tiny bit
24 Bread box?
25 Salted part of a margarita glass
28 *What it takes for a partnered dance
34 Down in the dumps
37 Merit
38 Ring up
39 *Thick as thieves, in the vegetable patch
44 "You can say that again!"
45 Settlement upgrade in Catan
46 Word before "sauce" or "bean"
47 Ranger-approved advice
52 Music you'll rave over!
53 Feel lousy
54 "Girls" creator Dunham
58 *Epitome of dance-floor clumsiness
64 Seehorn of "Pluribus"
66 Confine
67 "Chocolate" dog
68 "I'm down!"
69 Fifth-born in "Bridgerton"
70 Reputation or Lover, to a Swiftie
71 Stone of "Bugonia"
72 Had a hunch
73 What bumps 2 up to 3 — and a hint to the starred clues

DOWN
1 Lightning capital of North America
2 Swell
3 Moto Moto, in "Madagascar"
4 Rouse
5 Flat hill
6 Gas: Prefix
7 Blacken on a grill
8 Stick to, like a hobby
9 Do business with
10 Read, as a bar code
11 20-minute recharges
12 Many a Wordsworth poem
13 Wee bit
21 CPR expert
22 Qty.
26 Domed home
27 Adjective for Battell dorms, perhaps
29 "___ Haw"
30 Doechii's genre
31 Poet's before
32 Sign into law
33 Obamacare, for short
34 Like a day-old bagel
35 "Arabian Nights" prince
36 God squad
40 Letter holder: Abbr.
41 "Please, ___, I want some more"
42 "Don't call ___ comeback"
43 MoMA locale
48 AirPod's spot
49 North and Chicago West, to Kourtney Kardashian
50 Repetitive futbol cheer
51 North Pole staffer
55 Caught morays
56 Approaches
57 Facing the pitcher
59 "Very funny!"
60 Minnesota's state bird
61 Christian denom.
62 Melt together
63 "Mummified" a house, for short
64 Whiskey grain
65 Shorten, as pants

RECONTEXTUALIZING AND RECKONING: MIDDLEBURY BLACK FILM SERIES SCREENS "FOXY BROWN"

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

"The film(s) the man doesn't want you to see" is printed boldly across the poster, cueing a familiar logic in Black film history: exposure does not guarantee legitimacy. It gestures toward the 1970s film landscape, a decade often canonised through the rise of New Hollywood auteurs, even as a parallel film economy flourished in drive-ins and grindhouse theatres. Within that space, Blaxploitation emerged on Hollywood's periphery, placing Black protagonists at the centre of narratives about resistance to a corrupt white establishment, often condensed into the figure of "the man."

Blaxploitation films circulated widely and remained critically marginal. With nearly 300 Blaxploitation titles released, little of that popularity translated into critical legitimacy.

In response to this, Middlebury's Black Film Series has positioned itself as a site of recontextualisation. The series revisits films shaped by long-standing patterns of dismissal and restores them to public view within an institutional setting that once excluded them. This year's screening of "Foxy Brown" on Feb. 26, carried those dynamics into the present, foregrounding forms of Black expression long marked as excessive or disposable and examining the conditions under which they have endured.

Film scholar Ed Guerrero, author of "Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film", noted that Blaxploitation's commercial success and genre excess were used by mainstream critics and studios at the height of the genre's popularity to delegitimise the films aesthetically, thus framing 'popularity' as vulgarity and market appeal as evidence of cultural irresponsibility.

Curated by Associate Professor and Director of the Black Studies Program Jerry Philogene, the series draws on her work in diasporic visual culture to attend to images that move unevenly through history and institutions. The screening was further supported by Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies Enrique Garcia, who secured a copy of the film, and contextualised in conversation with Assistant Professor of Film & Media Culture Natasha Ngaiza, whose expertise in film and media studies situated "Foxy Brown" within a broader cinematic moment shaped by the political economy. Framed in this way, the event presented the film as part of a sustained Black cinematic tradition whose marginalisation has been institutional and thus renders its screening at Middlebury as an intervention into both American film history and the campus's ongoing negotiation of Black cultural presence.

"I think it's a great thing to have these films hold space at a PWI [predominantly white institution], especially one as small as Middlebury. A lot of people here don't really interact with Black media beyond contemporary stuff that's catered to them. I don't think most people are going out of their way to watch films like "Foxy Brown" or "Shaft." So having these movies hold space, and having discussions afterward about what they're doing and how Black people are represented, is really important," Che DeFreitas '27, Black Studies major and former BSU president' '24-25 and viewer said.

Released in 1974 and directed by Jack Hill, "Foxy Brown" arrived at the height of the Blaxploitation cycle.

The film follows Foxy, a woman driven by revenge after her boyfriend, a federal agent, is murdered for attempting to expose a criminal network involved in drugs and human trafficking. Its visual language draws heavily on the conventions of the genre: stylised violence, heightened choreography, and overarching sexual tones. Foxy occupies the centre of the narrative, moving through spaces structured to consume her image while actively working to dismantle the systems that organise them. The visual framework through which Black female sexuality has been interpreted in Western culture predates cinema itself. In the early nineteenth century, Sarah Baartman was publicly displayed and scrutinised as a spectacle — her body used to define Black sexuality as deviant and positioned in direct opposition to white ideals of femininity and purity. These logics carried forward into American film history, where Black women were repeatedly confined to a narrow set of archetypes.

"Foxy Brown" enters this representational history and works through its inherited limits. Foxy's sexuality remains highly visible and narratively productive, thus enabling movement, access, and even control within the film's world. The film simultaneously holds agency and exploitation within the same visual field by sustaining its tension and leaving unresolved conditions.

"I think the point of these films, especially for the time they came in, was really to showcase black people in these cool character roles. When, for years, black people, and especially black women, are in character types of a mammy, or they're relegated to slave roles, or, like, just not any kind of interesting character. They have these characters that have autonomy to them. And Foxy Brown, especially for black women, like that, is a huge character, because she is able to utilize for the first time in any kind of serious movie, she has her own autonomy," DeFreitas said.

"She moves through life like she's a she's a fucking badass, and she gets what she wants, she's able to stick it to the man, which is the point of a lot of these Blaxploitation films, but at the same time being portrayed in the ways that a lot of black characters ultimately become repetitively represented through," he added.

BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM
FILM SERIES-SPRING 2026
THURSDAYS, 6:30
AXINN 232
'the film(s) the man doesn't want you to see'
PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE SCREENINGS OF THESE BLAXPLOITATION FILMS.
SHAFT (1971), (2/12)
FOXY BROWN (1974), (2/26)
BLACULA (1972), (3/5)
BUCK AND THE PREACHER (1972), (4/2)
AFTER EACH SCREENING, THERE WILL BE A DISCUSSION AND A RAFFLE.
POPCORN AND SODA WILL BE SERVED.

COURTESY PHOTO /BLACK STUDIES FILM SERIES
The Black Studies Film series poster for the 2026 year.

"I liked "Foxy Brown". I thought it was a very fun movie, and I think that when we think about Black Studies, and we think about what movie we would watch for a Black Studies class, it feels like it will be sad or slow or hyper-intellectual. But this displayed very theoretical concepts in the field in a fun, vivid, and very artistic way." Arsema Lecko '26 said. "Everything from the fashion, to the hair, to the editing was very entertaining, and I think it was a very good reflection of what those movies meant at the time when it was produced and released."

Lecko, Black Studies major and former BSU president' 23-24, described the significance of this film to Middlebury and the overall media industry.

" This [Middlebury] is the last space I would think to encounter these types of movies. I think especially in the discussion we were talking a little bit about the depictions of Black people in those movies. They are prostitutes, they are pimps, and they are drug dealers. We are at a time in film and media where there is an emphasis on Black people needing to be perfect characters. They always need to represent the community and put their best foot forward [...] I think it is good to not have the best depictions because it shows nuance. Like the brother of Foxy was a drug dealer, yes, but as he explained, it was because of structural oppression as a Black man. He did not feel like he could fit into roles that would allow him to live an ethical life. I think that just because they are bad depictions does not mean that they do not have nuance," they said.

Nevertheless, the film does not evade critique. Foxy's actions are ultimately organised around devotion to a murdered male partner, and the film's central antagonist is a woman who profits from sexual exploitation, choices that complicate any straightforward feminist reading. This tension surfaced most sharply around the ending. After praising the film and the Blaxploitation series, Lecko went on to say, "[Foxy] was a very empowering figure and she went on this whole role of independence, and it was very impressive and inspiring as a Black woman," before describing the final confrontation as "a disappointing turn in the movie because it showed how male-centred everything was."

In that moment, Foxy's refusal to kill the film's white antagonist registered less as feminist justice than narrative limitation.

"She wasn't trying to get vengeance for the prostitution or abuse of women, or vengeance for her own assault. She was getting vengeance simply because her boyfriend got killed by them," Lecko added.

The ending pushes this discomfort further. With the support of her Black Panther allies, Foxy enacts a brutal form of justice that refuses to close. Castration replaces death, spectacle replaces moral resolution; when Foxy declares that death would be too easy, the scene lands as evidence of the cyclical nature of violence within systems that offer few alternatives.

By revisiting "Foxy Brown", Middlebury's Black Film Series did more than screen a cult classic. It reopened a chapter of Black film history that has long been visible without being fully reckoned with. For Black students at Middlebury, the screening affirmed that these films matter simply because they reveal how Black presence has been negotiated and asserted on screen. In bringing that history back into view, the series asked audiences to sit with what endures, what remains unsettled and why those questions still demand attention in our current climate.

CONVERSATIONAL ART: JUNE SU

By CHRISTY LIANG
Arts & Culture Editor

Conversational Art is a column of artist interviews (faculty & students alike) foregrounding the personal voice, the creative process and bouts of insight springing from the resonant space in-between.

Christy Liang: Which medium d Christy Liang: Which medium did you first start with?

June Su: I first started with a mechanical pencil. I started drawing when I was in third grade. I joined a cartooning club, and after school, we learned how to draw cartoons together. And from then on, I started drawing a lot in pencil, like from third to sixth grade. And I think I also picked up watercolor. Both of these mediums were very easily accessible.

CL: Where do you draw your inspirations from?

JS: I'm a poli-sci major, so I get inspired by visual history a lot. I took International Politics my sophomore year with my advisor, Kemi Fuentes-George. He likes to put a lot of pictures in his presentations and I always found those to be really interesting - particularly pictures that depict something kind of absurd. I also take a lot of screenshots on my computer of random dumb [things] like absurd advertisements saying "this is one hack that will help you get rid of your Alzheimer's." I always find the pictures for those advertisements so interesting. I collect them in a folder on my computer and paint them out sometimes. Some of my favorite artists are Francis Bacon and Leon Golub.

CL: When you paint, do you first have a compelling vision and then you are drawn to the canvas to fulfill that, or do you just start painting and let your impulse take you wherever?

JS: It's varied throughout the years. Right now, my practice has evolved into more so letting the picture develop itself. I've been really interested in composition as a force of its own. I also photograph for fun sometimes. For my recent thesis show the past semester, I went through my camera roll and took out photos of friends where somehow their expressions spoke to me. And I printed out a packet of these photos on papers. I would use that packet as a reference and then paint onto a canvas and treat it with different materials. For example, I used a lot of medical gauze for this past thesis.

CL: Do you think of yourself as like a channel, not exactly in control of what you're creating?

JS: That's a really interesting question. Also because we were talking about fate, and how you said that everything's predetermined in a way. I honestly have no stance on that. I don't know whether I think things are predetermined or not. I do prioritize having a strong political voice in my paintings and to a certain extent, that does feel like I'm a channel for something. But it feels fickle. I was talking to Matthew Schrader in the Studio Art department about 'how much do I want this or that painting to be an objective analytical essay where I'm trying to create an argument of something linear and specific' versus, 'this is just who I am as a person and this is my experience of the world.' I struggle between the two a lot.

CL: How have you evolved from Freshman to Junior year in terms of your artistic vision?

JS: I definitely evolved away from trying to always have something so significant to say in my paintings, at least like consciously planned out profound things to say. Studio art is my minor, whereas polisci is my major; trying to lessen my political naivete and also deepening my historical and moral knowledge in general has enriched my artistic practice and the ways that I formulate the abstract ideas that go into my paintings.

CL: How have your relationships shaped this evolution? Not just interpersonally, but also relationships with space and time, being in the web of all these things.

JS: It's also a very fitting question for me, because my previous artist statement for this semester was extremely abstract. It was about the Buddhist concept of interdependent origination. I'm 20 now, but I was 17 when I first came here. I think these ideas have definitely shown up in my art, like the way I now conceptualize time in a less black and white way. And that has definitely gone into my central idea for this past semester, which was about how interdependent origination means that there is no permanent truth or essence of all things. Everything is constantly bouncing off each other and arises in relationship with each other. But also, I want to make a disclaimer that I find it so hard to verbalize these things. It's not something I've worded in a way that has been super satisfying to me yet.

CL: This is about your column, I guess. What are some things that you learned from the painting professionals you interviewed?

JS: I immediately think of my interview with Brian Cirmo, who's a painter based in upstate New York. He taught the class that I took last J-term, Introduction to Oil Painting. And he definitely had a non-nepo way of becoming a very well-respected artist now. He came from a working-class background and worked several jobs at once to sustain his practice. It was illuminating because I often struggle with the question of how committed I am to making art my livelihood. And in an interview with Reverend Dr. François Scarborough Clemmon, I learned about how our artistic careers are very much shaped by the historical forces of his time. It makes me feel privileged to talk to these experienced artists with long lives behind them, not only to contextualize my professional career, but also where I am historically, like, what do my privileges or opportunities look like at this point, and how can I take advantage?

CL: Since you mentioned the historical moment, I've been feeling how there's just a helplessness to being an artist in this era that we're in. Like if we're in the 1960s, a piece of essay could engender a whole movement. But now it's hardly ever the case. I think art has lost a bit, if not much, of its potency.

JS: Well, I was immediately thinking of, and I want you to include that I'm talking out of my ass, this Zen Studies Podcast I've been listening to. One episode talked about how in the pre-modern world, there was a lot of community and faith. Then, modernity happened and scientific objectivity became this thing. But at this point, it's okay to lose the religion part because we still have this collective idea that humankind is progressing towards some scientific ideal. And now in the "postmodern" world we don't have either, so we all have lost meaning in a big way, or at least in the way we used to conceptualize it. But honestly, I'm a huge fan of contemporary art from this era. I really don't feel like technique is that big of a deal and that having some sort of profound thing you're trying to say, like in most classical paintings, is all that necessary. I guess I find vibes more important at this point in my life. But I fucking hate those New York City galleries that sit on the most expensive properties and have just one painting in them that's an empty mirror. I think material conditions must be addressed in art. But if you're trying to approach vibes from a genuine place, I would want to see that.

CL: How do you see yourself making art in Argentina, where you're spending the Spring semester?

JS: That's a really good question. I think I'm mainly going to take a lot of photos there, because I don't really foresee myself having the space to paint. I'm also going to keep a sketchbook. I do a lot of drawing of random people in public spaces. Something that I've found out recently is that when I draw things, I remember them better and more vividly. So I hope to draw a lot of things in Argentina to crystallize those experiences.

CL: It's interesting that you used the word crystallize, which is what I'm trying to do with words. But it's hard to arrest something from a stream of experience. It's never quite what is.

JS: I guess that for me, I try to think about it as little as possible. That's my practice in general. I'm trying to think as little as possible, which I guess in live drawing means how you're sitting right here, for example, I'm gonna not look at the page and draw you looking at me exactly like this with your hand on your chin. It's like I took a picture of this moment and just slapped it onto the paper. I love that drawing has that immediacy.

CL: But words don't. Because writing is already a retrospective act. You're already sitting somewhere else and reflecting and remembering. And then you're trying to crystallize, it feels quite ironic.

JS: That's so true. But I mean, it's still your present experience of those past things. Very interesting.

Editor's Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

STAFF PHOTO/JUNE SU

June Su '27 is a multimedia artist.

WHAT A SNOWSTORM REVEALED ABOUT MIDDLEBURY BASKETBALL

By DANTE AGUILAR
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / CALEB KENNAW

Former men's basketball head coach Jeff Brown at the banquet this January.

Who would you drive through a snowstorm for? For many Middlebury basketball alumni, the answer is Jeff Brown.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, amid winter storm warnings, a group of Middlebury's most accomplished basketball alumni made the drive back to campus — some with their families and small children — to honor the man who built the program they once represented.

Jeff Brown, the former Russell L. Reilly Head Coach of Middlebury men's basketball, retired after 28 seasons last year, and the Panther basketball family returned to celebrate this milestone. Brown's retirement marked the end of a career that made him the winningest coach in Middlebury basketball history.

Well, not quite. Middlebury Director of Athletics Erin Quinn '86 delivered the first of several speeches at Brown's retirement party, briefly disrupting the room's expectations.

"If you look at the records, he's actually the second-winningest coach," Quinn said. "His winning percentage is second. He's behind the legendary Simeon Murch, who retired with a 7–0 record back in the 1917–1918 season. That's going to be very hard to beat."

It was a bold way to open a series of speeches, but Quinn's delivery landed as a lighthearted joke — the perfect icebreaker for the night.

Quinn's joke fit well, as Jeff Brown's legacy was never about perfect records. In fact, for the first decade of his career, he was far closer to being the losingest coach in Middlebury history.

"I'm a slow learner, I guess," Brown reflected on his journey. Yet he learned well: in Brown's time at the helm, the Middlebury team was ranked as high as third in the nation in 2022, reached the NESCAC championship six times and won four since 2009, and reached the semifinals of the NCAA tournament in 2011.

As the night went on, each story added another tile to a growing mosaic — one that revealed not just these successes, but continuity, accountability and belief.

Still, what kind of coach was Jeff Brown beneath all the accolades? An answer can be found in comparing Brown to Middlebury's current head coach, Matt Goldsmith.

Goldsmith came to Middlebury from The College of New Jersey just before Brown retired last spring. Goldsmith is detail-oriented and relentless. Before every game, he hunts down a whiteboard — no matter the size — and carefully sketches out personnel breakdowns for his players. Before tip-off, he appears calm, almost detached, eyes locked on the opening jump as players go through their routines.

Once the ball is in the air, that calm suddenly vanishes.

Goldsmith coaches with a commanding presence. Whether his players are five feet away or on the opposite baseline, his voice cuts through the gym. If words fail, a blast from his whistle brings the team back to focus. He's unafraid to challenge referees, especially because he demands physicality from his team — a style that occasionally results in sloppy execution, but more often forces officials to make difficult calls. Goldsmith never misses the chance to advocate for his players.

In the huddle, he grounds the team in belief. No game is ever too far out of reach. Even when they're up, he expects them to set the tone, push the pace and dig deep defensively. Facing Keene State in early January, Goldsmith embraced that mindset before the game.

"They're over there thinking you're the nerds of Middlebury. It's your job to go out there and set the tone physically. Bruise them up, play our brand of basketball. Make them scared to come back here and play us."

Former players paint a strikingly different image of Brown as a coach. Ryan Sharry '12, a cornerstone of the historic 2010–11 team, described Brown as unwavering — especially in moments of chaos.

"Coach was always calm in the huddle," Sharry said. "Things could be as high as possible or as low as possible. Coach stayed at the same level. He didn't panic — so there was no excuse for us to panic either."

That composure didn't mean softness, however.

"He was phenomenally steady, but that doesn't mean he didn't give it to us when we needed it. And when he did, you knew you deserved it."

Sharry recalled one story that perfectly captured what that looked like on a day-to-day basis. Having shown up to practice a mere 15 seconds before the start, Brown turned to him and said, "Thanks for coming, but we'll see you tomorrow." Brown ultimately let him stay — but that message was all Sharry needed to hear.

"That was the best practice I had all year," Sharry reflected. "I apologized to Coach afterward, and he said, 'you know, Ryan, I need you to show me. You can't just go out there and play as a player. You can't just talk it. You need to show it. Show your teammates that you are a leader to them.'"

That expectation — show it, don't just say it — is where Brown and Goldsmith intersect.

Both believe leadership starts with the upperclassmen. Both believe players should be on the floor and ready to work at least 15 minutes early. Both believe team culture is built through daily habits, not speeches.

As long-time assistant coach Rob Alberts put it that night, "these two have completely different coaching styles — but it's fascinating that you can build a winning culture in different ways."

Jeff Brown's career is a testament to the fact that good things take time. He became the winningest coach not through impatience or perfection, but through consistency — by holding up the standard long enough for everyone else to rise to it. And judging by who was willing to drive through a snowstorm to honor him, that culture hasn't faded.

Editor's Note: Dante Aguilar '26 is the team manager for the men's basketball team.

MIRACLE AT MIDDLEBURY: MEN'S HOCKEY PULLS OFF THRILLING COMEBACK

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

The student section goes wild during Middlebury's dramatic comeback victory.

By THEO MANIATIS AND THIE HARTHONO
Sports Editors

One week after both Team USA ice hockey teams skated their way to gold medals at the Olympics, Middlebury men's hockey pulled off a miracle of their own. From 2–0 down with 1:50 left in the third period, the Panthers roared back to beat Wesleyan in double overtime, booking their ticket to the NESCAC semifinals.

"It's the best feeling in the world. Still running on an adrenaline high right now," Tyler Wishart '29 said, who scored the game-winning goal. "To bring a win to Middlebury and to keep playing with all these seniors means the world to us."

On Saturday, the crowd at Chip Kenyon '85 Arena numbered 1000 — as full as it had been for a game all season, maybe in years. Rally towels covered every seat, and a table of free posters greeted fans as they walked through the doors. And on the far side of the arena, an even larger poster hung, emblazoned with the words "Welcome to the Jungle."

Middlebury peppered the Cardinals' goal throughout the first period. Their first power play came with 18:00 elapsed, but Luc Malkhassian '29's riser and Reece Brednich '28's backhanded effort were both pushed away by Cardinal keeper Patrick McDevitt '28, who recorded a herculean 73 saves.

Wesleyan grabbed the first goal at the 7:55 mark of the second period. After the puck ricocheted off Panther goalie Andrew Heinze '27, a shot back toward the net bounced fortuitously off the ice and squeaked over Heinze's right pad. Later, a Cardinals player broke free with a one-on-one chance, but Heinze's outstretched left leg just kept the puck out.

Head coach Jack Ceglarski was impressed with his shot-stopper's performance.

"Heinze is one of the best goalies in the league, and his statistics show it, his performances show it, and the crazy thing with Andrew is that he has a knack for showing up in big games."

All was left to play for at the start of the third period. Dimitri Tzaferis '28 had a point-blank bid stuffed by McDevitt, and the rebound went wide of the left post. But with close to nine minutes left, a missed penalty by the referee allowed Wesleyan to make it 2–0 against the run of play.

"A lot of what our message was that we were saying on the bench and in the locker room was just stick with it," Ceglarski said.

Middlebury fans watched the clock tick down in disbelief. Their team had outshot Wesleyan 3:1, was in the 60s for shots on goal, and had dominated the faceoffs. However, the players still believed a comeback was possible.

"We just knew that if we stuck with what we were doing all night, that it was bound to happen that we were going to score," Wishart said. With 3:28 left in the third period, Middlebury pulled its goalie. The rest is for the history books.

At 1:50, Malkhassian redirected a shot to close the deficit. 2–1, Wesleyan. Just 37 seconds later, Wishart's speculative effort from the top of the zone bounced off McDevitt and fell to Landon Brownlee '29, who maneuvered the puck into the net to make it 2–2. Tie game.

Bedlam overtook Kenyon. Brownlee jumped up against the glass to celebrate with a mostly shirtless Panthers student section. Rally towels clouded the air as fans high-fived and hugged. It was Wesleyan's turn to watch in disbelief.

"We had done it before in the season," Brownlee said. "Obviously, the juice was flowing, and the boys were ready to go — we just stuck to it and got it done."

The first overtime period began with a relentless Panther onslaught on the Wesleyan goal. Pure exhaustion led the second half of the period to open up, and fans watched with bated breath as the teams traded shots, seasons on the line. The period ended with Middlebury outshooting Wesleyan 14–5, but no golden goal.

Middlebury came out firing just fifty seconds into the period, as Jake Stevens '29 ripped the puck off the right post. Kenyon rose to its feet, but the match drew on.

The Cardinals also had their chances. Five minutes after Stevens' attempt, Heinze fended off a dangerous riser with the shaft of his stick. His split-second reflex made all the difference.

Two more attempts by Brednich and Stevens hit the goalpost. The ringing of the posts signaled an impending defeat for the Cardinals. The crowd's anticipation was palpable, and the winner finally came with 9:56 to play. Brownlee tapped the puck off the boards to Wishart, who dashed inside before firing the puck into the right corner of the net.

Explaining his strategy, Wishart said, "My initial thought process was that it's a one-on-one right now. The D's gap was a little off, so I thought, 'he's giving me all this open ice in the middle of the ice so I'm going to take it.'"

Red jerseys collapsed on the ice, and for the second time that evening, the crowd erupted. As towels and shirts flew from the stands, Wishart threw his hands high and skated toward the student section, where he disappeared under a sea of his teammates. The Cardinals had put up a valiant defense, but the Panthers' offense overwhelmed in the end, outshooting them 75–25.

"I'm so happy for the guys with the amount of work they put in — not just today in the game — but all season and all week from top to bottom," Ceglarski said.

Middlebury survived the second-longest game in men's NESCAC tournament history. Among the fans, anticipation runs high for this weekend's final. Middlebury travels to Clinton, NY, to face Bowdoin in the Frozen Four on Saturday, with the hope of playing in the championship tilt on Sunday. When asked about the upcoming weekend, Ceglarski expressed confidence in his players: "I trust our brand against all teams, I believe in how we play a lot, and I believe in our guys."

TRINIDAD AND SKIBAGO

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

Of the excuses for missing class that Anthropology professor Michael Sheridan has ever received, Nikhil Alleyne's '28.5 ranks among the best. Instead of reading and attending lectures, Alleyne took the first nine days of the semester to do something nobody else had done before: ski for Trinidad and Tobago at the Winter Olympics.

On Feb. 14, Alleyne descended the giant slalom (GS) course in Bormio, Italy — a flash of bright red weaving between gates, with the national flag on his left shoulder — as he officially became the first athlete to represent the Caribbean nation in alpine skiing at the Games.

Alleyne's path to his own bit of history began in California. Starting at two years old, his father would take the family skiing in Tahoe every weekend. Alleyne soon joined a development program and began his racing career thereafter. He trained and competed at the Sugar Bowl Academy, a ski school in California, through his teens, though recurring shoulder injuries set him back as he approached college recruiting.

Despite being unable to ski for a varsity program, Alleyne had an opportunity to compete at the Olympic level. Having dual citizenship through his Trinidadian father, Alleyne began to race under the nation's International Ski and Snowboard (FIS) license. As the Milan-Cortina Games approached, Alleyne faced a decision about making his Olympic chances a reality.

"I got convinced that it could be a cool experience and it might mean a lot for the country," Alleyne said. He had a chance to do something special both for Trinidad and Tobago and, equally important to Alleyne, for his family.

Nevertheless, his shoulder injury — a torn labrum from repeated dislocations — kept Alleyne from recording any ski results for a year. Reaching the Olympics would require him to go all in, and to make up for the year of lost training, Alleyne decided to take the 2026 fall semester to train.

Alleyne joined Sugar Bowl's post-graduate team to train and race full-time. He competed in several FIS races, simultaneously spending up to two hours per day tending to his skis between practices and competitions. Without his own equipment staff, it was Alleyne's responsibility to tune the bases and sharpen the edges of his skis, along with shaping the sidewalls on a new pair of skis he received as the Olympics neared. Alleyne flew to Europe to train in the month prior to the Games, and soon he was in Italy preparing for his first run.

Months of intense training and practical organization were expected challenges that Alleyne faced in reaching his Olympic GS debut— but contracting norovirus in the days prior to the event came as a surprise.

"I had norovirus, so I was feeling pretty sick in my GS start," Alleyne said. "That was kinda tough for me."

It would be "kinda tough" for anyone to race the GS at the Olympics for the first time in their nation's history, let alone with norovirus. Regardless, Alleyne remained cool and, to his surprise, finished the first run. "I just pushed out of the start and hoped for the best."

Then came a second curveball: still sick, Alleyne badly injured a rib in training the next day.

"It still, like, really hurts. I think I might've broken it," Alleyne explained, gesturing towards his ribcage.

The slalom was planned for the next day. Only 44 of 96 competitors finished the race, many falling victim to the inclement conditions. Factoring in illness and an injured rib, Alleyne joined the ranks of disqualified skiers after Saturday's first run. He had missed a single gate, for which there is no forgiveness at the Olympics.

"It was not that good, honestly," Alleyne reflected about his performance. "But I didn't really go there for a result [...] so I'm not too upset about it."

The overall experience of representing his country mattered more to Alleyne. For instance, all nations have pins of their respective flags at the Olympics, and the pins of some lesser-known teams, such as Trinidad and Tobago, were in high demand — a true collectible for some fans.

"Everyone wanted ours [...] just walking around the street, people would ask you for pins all the time," Alleyne said.

He was also responsible for a much larger national symbol, standing as Trinidad and Tobago's flag bearer in the opening ceremony.

"I think they just gave it to me [...] I didn't know until a couple days before," Alleyne said.

Alleyne was not the sole Trinidadian competitor at the games. Emma Gatcliffe, a junior at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York, also skied in the GS and slalom, and the nation brought a bobsled team as well. Nonetheless, of the fun facts an admissions tour guide can tell prospective Middlebury students — from having a large window, to inventing quadball and the common agent in teargas — sending a member of the student body to represent Trinidad and Tobago in alpine skiing for the first time in Winter Olympic history certainly carries its own weight.